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SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS RATIFICATION OF
ARTICLE 98 AGREEMENT

REF: 05 AMMAN 9514

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (U) The legal committee of the Chamber of Deputies - the lower house of Jordan's parliament - on January 2 formally recommended the ratification of the U.S.-Jordan Article 98 agreement. The Chamber of Deputies had referred the agreement to the legal committee on December 7, after earlier rejecting it during its summer extraordinary session (reftel). The agreement, already approved by the Jordanian Senate, will now be placed on the lower house agenda for a full vote. NOTE: The legal committee also recommended on January 2 that Jordan accede to the International Criminal Court through ratification of the Rome Statute. END NOTE.

2. (C) COMMENT: Prospects are good that the Chamber of Deputies will eventually approve the Article 98 agreement, particularly since it now has the legal committee's positive recommendation, but neither we nor the Government of Jordan should take it for granted. The timing of the vote on the agreement is uncertain, and parliament must work through a heavy legislative agenda before its current session ends in March. Squabbling among MPs (septel) has already delayed consideration of the government's budget - parliament's first major task - and other items will undoubtedly compete for the action of MPs. However, Foreign Minister Khatib told Ambassador on December 31 that he expects parliament to ratify both the Article 98 agreement and the Rome Statute by March.
Hale